MARK TWAIN'S HARTFORD

BY

KENNETH RICHMOND ANDREWS

A.B., Wesleyan University, 1936
A.M., Wesleyan University, 1937

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
ENGLISH IN THE GRADUATE COLLEGE
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1948

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MARK TWAIN'S HARTFORD

I. The Colonization of Nook Farm, 1851-1871

A Connecticut lawyer named John Hooker decided in 1851 to move into Hartford, the city a distinguished ancestor of his had founded in 1636. With a brother-in-law, Francis Gillette, he bought a hundred-acre farm on the western outskirts of the small city and laid out, across the path of its future expansion, a beautiful subdivision for residential development. Buying property there, relatives and friends quickly formed a congenial, cultivated, and close-knit neighborhood, of which John's brilliant wife, Isabella Beecher Hooker, became the social leader. In her house the early residents — Thomas C. and Mary Beecher Perkins, the Reverend Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton and family, George and Lilly Warner, and the Joseph R. Hawleys — gathered for pleasant evenings of conversation about literature, temperance, education, and above all, Republican politics and Abolition. The little community prided itself on the brilliance of its intellectual life, the perfection of its social talent, the keenness of its wit, and the convenience and intimacy of its isolation from less desirable sections of the city.

In 1860, Charles Dudley Warner, George Warner's brother, was summoned to Hartford to help Hawley edit the *Evening Press*. Born in the Berkshires in 1829, he had been graduated from Hamilton College in 1851. In the subsequent nine years, he had surveyed for the railroads in the West, studied and practiced law, cultivated literary ambitions, and married a stunning woman, Susan Lee. Warner's political idealism, his gentle humor, his indestructible integrity, and his wife's piano-playing made him welcome to Nook Farm's communal intimacy. When his co-editor Hawley resigned his brevet as major-general after the Civil War and returned to the *Press*, Warner relinquished to him the political direction of the paper and began a lifetime of travel and authorship.

In 1862, Harriet Beecher Stowe began to build an ungainly house of eight gables on the Nook Farm knoll she had selected in childhood as the site of her dream house. She had long looked forward to retirement near her sisters (Mary Perkins and Isabella Hooker), without responsibilities "except those of common gentlefolk." Oakholm, the house into which she moved her family in 1864, proved so expensive that Harriet had to postpone retirement until fifteen books and innumerable articles had paid her debts. Meanwhile she could occasionally "put her feet upon the fender and talk till the air was blue," and enjoy her neighbors. In 1870 she moved to a more sensible house near Warner's and finally achieved the rest she had earned. Her presence was to make Nook Farm a national shrine.

In 1865, Joseph Hopkins Twichell and Harmony, his bride, settled on nearby Woodland Street. The young first pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church had served in the Civil War as chaplain of the roughest regiment he could find. His experience with blood, disease, death, and pagans in uniform had widened immeasurably his Connecticut horizons, increased his natural gifts as a counselor, and encouraged his development toward a broad tolerance for human failings and a boundless faith in human nature. His behavior and personality made him immediately popular in Nook Farm. He preached successful sermons supporting the Christian ethic, avoided theological refinements, and scored an immense personal success as an earthy, athletic, handsome man — quick to laugh and infinitely attractive to a flock desiring the kind of easy leadership he had to offer.

Mark Twain first saw Hartford on January 21, 1868. The Hookers were his hosts; Elisha Bliss's desire to publish *Innocents Abroad* was his business. Nook Farm delighted him. Hartford, he wrote in correspondence for the *Alta California,* was the most beautiful, prosperous, and moral city he had seen. A half-dozen visits during the next two years redoubled his first pleasure in the place. By the time he brought his fiancée, Olivia Langdon, to see Alice Hooker married in June of 1869, he had decided to live there. But his father-in-law's purchase for him of an interest in the Buffalo *Express* deferred his intention. Mark himself had wanted to buy into the Hartford *Courant,* with which Hawley and Warner had merged the *Evening Press* in 1867. In 1870, Mark Twain persuaded his brother Orion to settle in Hartford. A year later, Mark, Livy, and their son, Langdon, moved as lessees into the Hooker house to begin twenty years of residence in Nook Farm. Mark's fear that he might not be able to maintain his family on the neighborhood level of prosperity only strengthened his determination to build a mansion of his own in the handsomest neighborhood he knew, among the people, of all his enormous acquaintance, he preferred to live beside.

Twenty years after its subdivision, Nook Farm had become, then, a literary colony. An examination of its letters, diaries, and books prompts me to describe the cultural environment in which three important writers thrived, to relate their work to its emotional, intellectual, and social context, and to make suggestions which may be relevant to the study of American life and literature in the late nineteenth century. I will undertake, in turn, summaries of the religious and secular experience of Nook Farm, of its representative attitudes toward national affairs, and of the literature arising out of interaction between artist and environment.

II. The Varieties of Religious Experience, 1871-1891

The Civil War set loose disruptive forces to alter American life. The religious experience of Hartford reflects the sub-surface turbulence of the post-war period. The residents of Nook Farm, without exception, had been trained in the austere but stable certainties of Calvinism. They had also all abandoned the belief of their childhood, with private consequences belying the serene aspect of Hartford's liberal Congregationalism. Horace Bushnell, the Emerson of Hartford, had been the destroyer of Calvinism in Connecticut and the architect of a faith elevating individual intuition over theology. A practical result of his influence was a decline in the importance of religion in American thought. He broke the iron bands of discipline binding the New Englander to his church, abdicated the authority of the ministry, and by relegating religious experience to the instinctive spirituality of individuals, weakened by the unifying power of institutional religion. Bushnell paced the search for a flexible religious doctrine which would permit its believer the fullest participation in secular affairs.

Harriet Beecher Stowe seconded on a popular level Bushnell's professional conclusions. She preached in most of her books the simple belief that God loves all his children and proffers salvation to all who recognize him. The artlessness with which this theme is allowed to dominate her novels does not reduce her stature as one of the keenest analysts of her generation's religious temper. Her New England novels contain a most thoroughly documented account of Calvinism and its implications. But by millions she was valued not for her insight but for the relief and comfort she persuasively offered. Once she had herself abandoned the insufferable creed of her father, old Lyman Beecher, she became a missionary for tolerance and a leveller of the sects.

Abandonment of the unserviceable rigidities of Calvinism opened the way everywhere to a multi-faceted development in religious ideas. Among effects not entirely healthful or benign was a moral upheaval which erupted throughout the United States in explosions of varying severity. One of these, the Henry Ward Beecher-Elizabeth Tilton scandal, rocked Nook Farm. Beecher, the most influential follower of Bushnell, was well known there. When in 1871 Victoria Woodhull — suffragist, free love advocate, spiritualist, and the eccentric product of disintegration in religious belief — charged him publicly with adultery, Isabella Hooker's insistence that her brother was guilty brought consternation and heartsickness to Hartford. The estrangements which persisted through the five-year life of the scandal were never fully healed. This storm, ulti-

mately traceable to changes in the moral and religious climate, disturbed Nook Farm's hitherto cloudless serenity.

Henry Ward Beecher's disaster did not deter Bushnell's successors in Hartford. A clerical triumvirate, Burton, Parker, and Twichell — wearers of Bushnell's mantle — refused to believe that Beecher was guilty or that spiritual unrest was associated with the optimistic faith they preached. Burton, pastor of the Park Church, loved people; he celebrated the joy of his friendships in a fantastically ornamented prose which fascinated his congregation and found Mark Twain for its publisher. His colleague, Parker, less attractive as a person, was a pillar of the community, of the Yale Corporation, and of the Second Church, which he led for sixty years. His hobby was literature. His own faith in the promise of human progress became complacence over results already accomplished. Twichell loved these two men. His religious belief during the seventies and eighties was a confident extension of his earlier views; he persisted in a personal humility which the acclaim of his city and a growing fame throughout the East could not diminish. Burton, Parker, and Twichell presided over an increasingly secular religious activity. Their churches became institutions for community good works; prayer meetings gave way to spelling bees. To use the term of William James, the religion of "healthy-mindedness" dominated Hartford Congregationalism.

But somehow the orthodox liberalism did not satisfy the religious requirements of the Nook Farm colony. The most radical departure from the conventional faith was taken by Isabella Beecher Hooker. Her career as a spiritualist marks the extreme of disturbance which, as a social tide, reached into the lives of all her neighbors. An ardent convert to the spiritualism of Victoria Woodhull, she was bent on introducing her friends to its abundant solace. As she grew increasingly neurotic, she became convinced that she was destined to rule the world. After a matriarchal presidency of the United States, she would govern first the earth and then the universe as the bride of Christ. When in December of 1876 she felt sure the moment of her ascension had come, she invited all of Nook Farm and most of Hartford's mediums to a New Year's Eve party. After a remarkable evening, the clock struck twelve without heralding the coming of the Lord, and Isabella's guests left without knowing they had been invited to the Millennium.

Mrs. Hooker was not insane. She was rather a peculiarly susceptible victim of the disturbance accompanying disintegration of a stable society into the whirling complexity of modern times. Even Mrs. Stowe, whose normality is incontestable and whose religion was elastic enough for most emergencies, was subject to compelling spiritist manifestations. Her

husband had enjoyed vivid hallucinations ever since in childhood an affectionate, invisible friend named Harvey had made life tolerable. Mrs. Warner apparently succumbed to Isabella's persuasions to spiritualism. Mark Twain, certainly no spiritualist, took vivid, serious interest in a psychic phenomenon which he called mental telegraphy. All Nook Farm experimented with the occult.

Despite the wide range of intuitional experience in Nook Farm, only Mark Twain rejected formal Christianity. His Calvinist upbringing was early modified into a benign determinism, which during his courtship of Livy temporarily yielded to her conventional beliefs. After his move to Hartford, Mark attended Twichell's church for a few years, but neither he nor any of his family joined its membership. He was under no compulsion to conceal his disbelief in a personal God, for he was permitted to think as he liked — especially since he zealously practiced the every-day ethics of the Christian church. That his friendship with Twichell was unaltered by differences of opinion does not prove Twichell's remissness or Mark's pretense to a faith he did not hold. Paine's *Biography* to the contrary, the two friends argued incessantly their respective convictions.

Mark Twain's rejection of Christianity was not a rebellion against uniform Puritanism in Hartford; it was an individualistic reaction paralleled by the religious improvisations of his neighbors. During his happiest years, he was less than his friends preoccupied with religion. But even during the period of his best adjustment to the world in which he lived, moments of causeless despair, demonstrations of absurd lack of perspective toward the accidents of life, and recurrent remorse made him also a limited casualty of a generation torn loose from its moorings, and opened the way to the free-floating despair of his later years. His revolt, considered here in the context of his neighbors' religious experience, seems far from erratic. He and his friends found themselves inadequately equipped to live at peace in a disorganized society. The response of Nook Farm's ex-Calvinists to a new environment was understandably defective. Deep entanglements with destiny had not vanished with the eradication of a morbid theology. Out of the sensitivity of the Nook Farm writers and out of the immaturity of their generation arose a few books which, since they are great literature, justify study of the emotional complexity behind them.

III. The Varieties of Secular Experience, 1871-1891

The secular life of the seventies and eighties showed from day to day few signs of private travail. Devoted to making neighborhood congeniality a way of life, Nook Farm pursued ideals of material comfort, family

happiness, abundant hospitality, varied recreation, and cultural self-improvement. Mark Twain enthusiastically adopted the community's social purpose; almost immediately he became the key figure in the pleasant intimacy unifying his circle.

House and home — the repository of Nook Farm's domestic satisfaction — were objects of careful, systematic, and relatively imaginative cultivation. Mark Twain's new house (completed in 1874) reflected the elegance he expected from the $125,000 he poured into building and grounds. His neighbors' homes, less magnificent, were comfortably and informally furnished and bursting with the impedimenta of bric-a-brac collectors. Within these houses, Nook Farm people gave careful thought to their family lives. Domesticity permeated the community as the families extended hospitality to each other with a freedom made possible by the seclusion of the neighborhood and the compatibility of the neighbors. Hospitality was extended further to a procession of visiting celebrities. Literary men like Howells, Osgood, Fields, Aldrich, Harte, Cable, Boyesen, and Harris visited Mark and Warner; feminists led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton stopped at the Hookers; President Grant and assorted senators came to see Hawley and others. The guests were uniformly charmed by life in Nook Farm.

The hospitality for which the community was famous produced, beside stimulation, a cumulative weariness. Social obligation diverted the creative energy of the resident artists, absorbed much of the time available for work, and contributed enormously to an almost intolerable burden of expense. But despite the price, the Hartford writers remained loyal to their way of life.

Other recreation, and relief from housekeeping, was sought at home and abroad. In town, but outside the family circle, tennis, bicycling, skating, sleighing, and walking were the chief sports. The theater became by 1880, after Mark Twain completed a campaign against an old taboo by sponsoring Will Gillette's early career as an actor, a respectable and popular diversion. But frequent travel was the most satisfactory amusement. Biennial trips to Europe, alternating with summer sojourns at shore or mountain resorts, were social necessities. Travel increased the congeniality of Hartford people for each other, extended sectional ideas by exposing them to old-world and national concepts, and enriched conversation by enlarging common experience. The literary people of Nook Farm sought the same recreation as the business leaders. Both groups were equally determined to live agreeably and intelligently.

The educational opportunity provided by travel was supplemented at home by an organized intellectual life. The Monday Evening Club,

founded by Bushnell in the sixties, brought twenty business and professional men together for regular discussion of public affairs. Mark Twain used it as a testing ground for his most unconventional ideas. The Saturday Morning Club was an organization Mark formed to educate the young girls of the neighborhood in self-expression on every topic. The Browning Society, for women of Livy's age, was also a creation of Mark's. The members of these groups devoted themselves enthusiastically to cultural pursuits. Club life swept the country in the nineties, but long before then the clubs of Hartford were a strong link between Mark Twain and his community.

Examination of the behavior of Hartford people as they lived together shows that the rigidity of their decorum — sometimes thought to have throttled Mark Twain's real genius — has been exaggerated. A definite ideal of proper conduct, of course, marked the social life of the city, particularly as dissolving religious certainty called for a substitute force to hold society together. But during the decades of Mark Twain's residence, Hartford's conventionality was neither hollow nor sinister. Mark endorsed its purpose, but still retained his independence. He was never penalized for his minor indiscretions; his neighbors, in fact, were inclined to consider him more "refined" than he actually was. Nook Farm was easy to live in. It turned spontaneously to forms for behavior which unified the character of its pleasant association and which took enough of the unexpected out of life to make it agreeable. Propriety, however, was at this period in equilibrium with self-expression.

IV. Ideas of America, 1871-1891

A supplement to its domestic interest in achieving a fully developed personal and neighborhood life, Nook Farm's concern with the progress of the nation during its postwar growth appears in integrated attitudes toward politics, business, philanthropy, and reform.

Politically, Nook Farm remained Republican. Since the Democratic party was thought tainted by pro-slavery and over-friendliness to masses of ignorant immigrants, even the corruption of Grant's administration (which acutely troubled Hartford) was insufficient to weaken traditional loyalty to Republicanism. The political future of the country was thought to be in the hands of an electorate of dubious capacity for civic affairs. Two campaigns — Tilden versus Hayes, 1876, and Cleveland against Blaine, 1883 — sharpened Nook Farm's interest in politics. When Tilden was announced the winner of the first, Hartford was sickened by the Democratic victory, then worried by the possibility of bloodshed during the fraudulent recounts, and eventually gladdened when Hayes was in-

augurated without violence. The choice between Cleveland and Blaine meant voting either for a Democrat with a mistress or a Republican with a reputation for dishonesty. Most of Hartford, disturbed by this dilemma, stayed with its party, but Twichell and Mark Twain bolted. Twichell was not, despite Mark's faulty remembrance to the contrary, threatened with dismissal because of his apostasy. Mark himself, progressing from his tory attitudes of 1871-75, was growing more and more liberal, for his developing humanitarianism was sensitive to the widespread unemployment of 1877. He attained political independence in a community as instinctively Republican as most of northern America.

Hartford's business ideas were similarly conservative. The city's insurance, textile, and machinery executives were canny individualists who shunned frenzied speculation, sought a dependable prosperity, and tried to unite commerce and culture. The subscription book publishers, in particular, created new reading habits, in spite of their refusal to distribute anything but sure-fire successes. The professional men of Nook Farm watched closely the business activities of their friends. Mark Twain undertook an industrial career of his own, but, lacking Yankee caution, he failed both as promotor of the Paige type-setter and as publisher. Authors, lawyers, and politicians shared with the capitalists the conviction that industrial democracy was a successful experiment. Tremors caused by business dishonesty now and then shook the community, but no real insight into the amorality of private capitalism in the Gilded Age disturbed their confidence in material progress.

The capitalist system, of course, was not quite perfect. The poverty-stricken of the community, unbenefited by progress, had to be cared for. Nook Farm led a tireless, city-wide campaign to relieve the sufferings of the poor during hard winters and recurring depressions. Even those who felt that every sober, industrious man could, in a land of plenty, support himself and his family in comfort, joined with Mark Twain and Mrs. Stowe in a succession of calico sociables, charity bazaars, and subscriptions for charity. The paternalism of these efforts was temporarily effective as the answer to economic inequity. The Irish workmen who, though they helped make Hartford the richest city (per capita) in the United States, got little for their pains, did not strike. Workers acquiesced in the ideology of their employers.

Once slavery was abolished, disposition to reform vanished in Nook Farm. Only in Isabella Beecher Hooker's forty-year crusade for woman's suffrage did dissatisfaction with the *status quo* find articulate expression. Isabella persuaded her Nook Farm friends to help establish the Connecticut branch of the National Woman's Suffrage Association. Desper-

ately anxious to make the movement respectable, she was defeated by her alliance with advocates of free love. She managed to secure passage of an equal property-rights bill in Connecticut, but Hartford resisted her main arguments in order to preserve its notion of woman as tender, inviolate, domestic, and musical — too pure for business and politics. The local ideal of womanhood influenced the choice of materials and the characterization of the Hartford writers. Feminism, now of little other interest, absorbed the only reformist energies at large in the city.

The writers heartily supported the stability, the economic and political conservatism, and the ethical inclination of their society. But as the two decades of their association passed, they began to see the imperfections of modern America. Mark Twain was moving toward Howells' socialism. Warner feared the encroachments of the financial plutocracy. Mrs. Stowe saw materialism crowding out Christianity. Their misgivings were not severe enough, however, to set artist against businessman in Hartford. Ideologically, the city was a unit.

V. Literature in Hartford, 1871-1891

The literary ascendancy of Nook Farm was the culmination of a literary tradition which since the seventeenth century had marked Hartford as an articulate city. The early divines, the Hartford Wits, the Knights of the Round Table, Lydia Sigourney's coterie, and a succession of prolific educators, scientists, antiquarians, and lexicographers wrote hundreds of books of every description. In Hartford, literary aspirations were cherished also by blacksmiths, insurance men, housewives, and children. Almost the whole population looked upon literature as a non-esoteric diversion or a perfectly sensible occupation. An attitude two centuries old made inevitable the appropriateness of Nook Farm's literary product to the whole life of the community in which it was created.

It is convenient to approach the millions of words written by the Nook Farm writers through an examination of their professionalism, their social criticism, their relationship to the genteel tradition, and their nostalgic recollection of an earlier America. First, Mark Twain, Warner, and Mrs. Stowe were compelled to earn large sums of money to maintain their families, homes, and status in the community. Their dependence on royalties forced them to acquire and hold an enormous public.

Mrs. Stowe's pot-boiling days were almost over by 1871, but through her whole career the pressure of necessity sustained the volume and variety of her incredible labors. Charles Dudley Warner chose for the staple product of his professionalism the travel book, for which an insatiable appetite existed. His explorations of the world gave him a repu-

tation as a sage; he converted it to cash in a variety of journalistic enterprises. Mark Twain, very much a member of this guild, recognized the prospective sale of almost every book as an important condition of its composition. Most of Mark's product during these busy years is better than hackwork, but his literary activity was in part governed by its remunerativeness.

Warner and Mrs. Stowe assumed that the growing literate class consisted of educable seekers after information, moral culture, and recreation. Mrs. Stowe's frequent appeals to conscience and Warner's more subtle advocacy of the good life found their marks. Their humorist neighbor aimed his books at lower levels of appreciation; he desired to entertain the "submerged masses." Fortunately, each writer found his audience receptive to the kind of book he preferred to write. Keeping that audience involved minor compromises with taste and inclination, but no crippling disabilities.

Yet the effects of their professionalism loom large in their total accomplishment. First, their permanent achievement was limited by a prudent refusal to experiment with technique or materials. Second, their creative energy was dissipated in over-production. Third, their self-critical keenness was so much blunted by necessity that they could not tell good work from trash. More happily, however, their professionalism led them to create a literary style, which, though developed primarily to serve the kind of audience they cultivated, contributes greatness to their best work. Mrs. Stowe's style, down-to-earth, informal, and humorous, was perfectly adapted to her housewife audience, but its very artlessness makes it still attractive and readable. Warner, also determined to be instantly comprehensible, considered lucidity the key to good style. Mark Twain's clarity, concreteness, and vigor — the chief characteristics of perhaps the most influential style in our literature — were his answers to the pressing need to be understood by a nation of ordinary people whose sensibility he shared and whose attention he wished to engage.

Identification of literary success with the social standards of Hartford may have impaired the Nook Farm colony's ability to assume an intellectually detached attitude toward its generation, but it did not mute its comment on contemporary society. Mrs. Stowe wrote *Pink and White Tyranny, My Wife and I,* and *We and Our Neighbors* in the early seventies to condemn the New York smart set as frivolous, selfish, and immoral. To an age "dusty" with materialism, she recommended permanent marriages, enlightened homemaking, education (but not enfranchisement) for women, and kindness to animals. Sprightly, amusing, and naïve, these books reassert Mrs. Stowe's primary concern for religion

and her certainty that a revival of old-fashioned morality would eliminate every ill.

Warner's comment on his own time consists of one set of essays reproducing life in his own neighborhood, another evaluating national developments, and a trilogy of novels. In *My Summer in a Garden, Backlog Studies,* and *In the Wilderness,* he idealizes Nook Farm's domesticity. In another half-dozen books, he urges individual self-cultivation and personal integrity as correctives for a mistaken national devotion to material success. His literary criticism, preserved in *The Relation of Literature to Life* and *Fashions in Literature* insists on idealization of nature and understanding of the times in which literary classics were composed. He found his own time over-devoted to false notions of equality, mad for money, and spiritually adrift. Warner's books on American manners (*Their Pilgrimage, A Little Journey in the World*) are detailed, partially perceptive, and dedicated to exposing the shallowness and emptiness of high society. His contrast of the ethical culture of Hartford with the predatory viciousness of the plutocracy is disapproval of a class rather than wholesale condemnation of an age. Neither he nor Mrs. Stowe went deep into the problems of industrialism, but each recognized the disintegrative multiplicity of his period and attempted to interpret it.

Mark Twain showed less interest between 1870 and 1890 in trying to disentangle social forces. Without the didactic impulses of his neighbors, his social criticism is less than theirs a conscious effort to correct deviations from the kind of behavior sanctioned by Nook Farm. *The Gilded Age,* written with Warner, attacks corruption in government, satirizes speculation, and reflects its authors' distrust in the ignorant electorate. *A Connecticut Yankee,* written sixteen years later, is the work of a triumphant celebrant of nineteenth-century democracy and the newly confident defender of the common man. Mark's enthusiasm for material progress evaporated in the nineties; in the meantime his social criticism was scattered and fragmentary.

All these writers judged their times against standards growing out of their religious and community experience. Their rebellion against the religion in which they had been brought up had not diminished the power of conscience or completely secularized their attitudes. They sensed a conflict between industrialism and morality. But, so much were they involved in the contradictions of their period, they could not articulate its momentous questions. Their social criticism is testimony to their involvement in their time rather than to their understanding of its complexity.

Quite naturally, the Nook Farm writers wrote in the genteel tradition. Charles Dudley Warner and young Richard Burton, as critics of literature, defended it against vulgarity. Since Warner, Burton, and Mrs. Stowe grew up in the traditions bringing gentility to flower in the eighties, they were not themselves tempted to violate its canons. Mark Twain, on the other hand, found himself encouraged toward refinement. *The Prince and the Pauper* was designed to satisfy well-wishers who longed to read something fully worthy of his talents.

Hartford, fond of Mark Twain's burlesque, ascribed noble purposes to his crudest humor. But the city could not feel that his work had the stateliness of enduring classics. Edwin Pond Parker wrote Mark in 1880 that the community expected "some first-class serious and sober work." Mark could reply that *The Prince* was almost ready. He submitted the manuscript to the entire neighborhood for criticism, modified his text in response to almost every objection, and finally produced the book Hartford was long to consider his greatest gift to posterity. The community was disappointed by the backsliding apparent in *Life on the Mississippi* and *Huckleberry Finn,* but it explained this and subsequent defection as the fault of a public unresponsive to really great books.

All in all, the pressure Hartford exerted to tame Mark Twain was very mild. Mark accepted the basic gentility of Nook Farm for his personal life; his literary departures were minimized by a neighborhood tolerantly inclined to like him as he was. The possibilities for conflict never materialized. Mark Twain and his neighbors differed less in sensibility than has been supposed, the gentility of Nook Farm was less rigid, and the censorship exercised by an apparently conventional society less sinister. Mark Twain controlled his own adaptation to Eastern mores. He complied with the rules, and under their relatively benign government said everything he really had to say.

If the Hartford writers had composed only the books comprising their hackwork, their comment on modern America, and their deference to the genteel tradition, their present-day importance would be severely limited. Amid all the pressures that forced their mediocre work into defective form, however, nostalgic recollection of times gone by germinated in Nook Farm a literature of a much higher order.

Mrs. Stowe's New England tetralogy — *The Minister's Wooing, The Pearl of Orr's Island, Oldtown Folks,* and *Poganuc People* — re-creates with sympathy and insight the social and religious history of her homeland and the essential character of its people. *Oldtown Folks,* Mrs. Stowe's master-work, makes clear that her intention in these novels was not so much a determination to recall America to original virtue as to

express her own yearning for the simple certainty and unquestionable integrity of a stable, pre-industrial society. Her instinctive sympathy with the ideals of her native region makes her use of local color not only a new departure in fiction but a passionate utterance about life. She could better understand the world from which she came than the very different one in which she dwelt at maturity. Sustained by her appeal to all men's nostalgic concern with the past, her New England books transcend all her faults as a novelist to attain permanence as the best record we have of the whole life of the country's oldest and most influential province.

Warner had himself grown up in a corner of New England which still retained in his formative years the rock-founded stability and external austerity of the eighteenth century. *Being a Boy,* unpretentious, detailed, and graceful, is the monosyllabic record of his Berkshire childhood. But beyond this explicit memorial to the past, Warner's total serious work is in a sense not only a summons but a recall to the good life, as if that life had once been a reality in the earlier days of the republic. Whenever his voice is still audible, he speaks of a way of life either vanished or soon to go.

The clearly imperishable work of Mark Twain, furthermore, is similarly the record of the region and the times in which he grew up. *Tom Sawyer* is a classic because it idealizes boyhood and corresponds with most men's recollection of its meaning. *Life on the Mississippi,* in which the magnificence of the first part adjoins the worthlessness of the second, demonstrates that the use of Mississippi materials by itself does not determine Mark's greatness. Those materials must be early experiences remembered in middle age. *Huckleberry Finn,* a serious book, marks in its acceptance of human imperfections, in its balanced response to the meanness of river whites and the magnanimity of Nigger Jim, the high point of Mark's adjustment to life in the eighties. *Tom Sawyer* is wishful, but *Huckleberry Finn* is the mature realization that life is not, and need not be, idyllic. Mark Twain's greatest books appear to owe their superior strength, not to greater effort, higher purposes, or greater "literary" skill, but to an emotional certainty which permitted him to rise above his limitations as a disciplined craftsman and conscious artist.

All the books written by the Nook Farm writers under the influence of nostalgic recollection are good; all those not affected by this emotion are mediocre. The extent to which this generalization is accurate and suggestive rules out explanation by coincidence. It seems to me inescapable that Mark Twain, Charles Dudley Warner, and Harriet Beecher Stowe — rebels against the Calvinist explanation of earth, heaven, and hell —

found themselves not quite at home in the multiplicity of their maturity. To an inarticulate uncertainty I attribute their most complete literary expression. The classics emerging from Nook Farm are remembrances of a society more secure, more certain, and more beautiful than their own. If these observations are defensible, the composition of masterpieces by professional writers who wasted their energy in over-production, who proved incapable of dissecting their own generation, who accepted (on the logical level) the ideals of their own time and place, no longer appears an inexplicable accident. Curious defects, like the ending of *Huckleberry Finn,* seem less puzzling than inevitable. All their writings testify to their entanglement in a widespread complexity particularly visible in the extraordinarily well-developed microcosm Nook Farm turns out to be.

VI. The Dissolution of Nook Farm, 1891-1918

Nook Farm developed for twenty years before it flowered as a community during the subsequent twenty years of Mark Twain's residence; it disintegrated during another two decades after Mark Twain's departure in 1891. Harriet Beecher Stowe, mindless and childlike, lived on until 1896. Her turmoils and troubles were all behind her; she spent her lucid days in calm expectancy. Her death made the old friends assembled at her funeral dwell upon the faded grace and past glory of the neighborhood; for them the burial of Mrs. Stowe had the finality of a historic moment.

John and Isabella Hooker lived until 1901 and 1907, respectively. Their old age was a prolongation of the main interests of their lives. John wrote his reminiscences, combed Cicero for appropriate last words for his obituary, and lived like the proper embodiment he was of "good old Colonial stock and of old Colonial stuff." His wife pursued her passion for feminism and spiritualism until the day of her death. Infuriated by the refusal of men to give her the right to vote, she was comforted by spiritist assurances that her life in heaven would more than compensate for the sorrows of her earthly existence. A wrangle over her will stirred again in the community the animosity which she had first aroused by her courageous, if eccentric, battles against prejudice.

Charles Dudley Warner worked on during nine busy years after 1891. He published *The People for whom Shakespeare Wrote,* a pleasant, superficial study of Elizabethan manners. More important, he completed the trilogy (begun in *A Little Journey in the World*) with *That Fortune* and *The Golden House.* Full of details valuable to an understanding of contemporary manners, Warner's late novels continue his deprecation of

American submission to ideals different from Hartford's. Interested in social science as well as literature, he served as president of both the American Social Science Association and of the National Institute of Arts, Science, and Letters. He died in 1900, one of the best known authors in America. After him, Nook Farm was no longer a literary community. The great had all left it.

Mark Twain had gone from Nook Farm in 1891 to recoup his fortunes so that he could afford to live again in Hartford. His bankruptcy in 1894 prolonged his European residence for ten years. The death of his daughter Susy in the Hartford house in 1896, and the exaggerated sorrow after it ultimately made return to happy scenes impossible. Hartford had become the city of heartbreak. Nevertheless, Mark visited his friends there many times. The intimacy between the Clemenses and the Twichells did not falter; a voluminous correspondence and frequent meetings maintained it. Into Twichell's tolerant ear, Mark poured the "music of his malediction." In opposition to his friend's confident optimism, he reiterated that America, rotten to the heart, was incurably stricken with money madness, that life was a lacerating experience intolerable in its senseless pain. The volatility of temperament and the imperfect adjustment to real life which had been in evidence even during his years in Hartford had permitted a desolating conviction of failure. Twichell met Mark's execrations and self-condemnation with patient attention, lively argument, and sympathy accumulated through forty years of intimacy. He buried Mark Twain in 1910.

Twichell's own life in Hartford, after Nook Farm had lost its personages, consisted of his pastoral duties, the collection and maintenance of voluminous memorabilia, the affairs of the Yale Corporation, and miscellaneous writings. Beside the continuous extension of his private journal, he wrote magazine articles on Nook Farm writers, on foreign missionaries, and on miscellaneous church subjects, as well as a book-length life of John Winthrop. With his heartiness, humor, tolerance, and sympathy undiminished, he continued to exert a powerful hold on his fellows. Though his fame as a personality was now nation-wide, his personal humility was still unaffected by the tributes with which his old age was graced.

Joseph Hopkins Twichell was the last to die (1918) of the important members of the Nook Farm community. His experience spanned the modernization of America, his attitudes were representative of the optimism of his age. He was utterly untouched by the disturbing influences which complicated the lives of his neighbors. Living out a completely normal

life as characteristic of his time as the lives of his more sensitive friends, he died at a time when widespread disillusion was undermining the confidence of Victorian America. As an event his death ended the history of Nook Farm. As a symbol, it signalizes the disappearance of ideas and experience which were its way of life.

VITA

Kenneth Richmond Andrews was born in New London, Connecticut, May 24, 1916. He was graduated from the Bulkeley High School in New London in 1932. In 1936 he was made Bachelor of Arts (with Highest Honors in General Scholarship and Distinction in English), and a year later Master of Arts, by Wesleyan University. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. In 1937 he began study for the doctoral degree in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois, and from 1937 to 1941 he was a teaching assistant in the Department of English. He was one of the founding editors of *Accent,* a literary quarterly published in Urbana, Illinois. From June, 1941, to February, 1946, he served, as enlisted man and officer, in the Army of the United States. He currently holds a senior reserve commission in the United States Air Forces. He is married and the father of one child. From February to June, 1946, he was Instructor in English at the University of Illinois. During the academic year 1946-47, while continuing his doctoral dissertation *in absentia,* he served as Instructor in Business Administration at the Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University. He is presently Assistant Professor of Business Administration at that institution.